DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 455 694 FL 026 831

AUTHOR Usuki, Miyuki
TITLE From the Learners' Perspectives: The Needs for Awareness-Raising towards Autonomy and Roles of the Teachers.
PUB DATE 2001-00-00
NOTE 12p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Students; *English (Second Language); Foreign Countries; Higher Education; *Independent Study; Personal Autonomy; Questionnaires; Second Language Instruction; Second Language Learning; Student Motivation; *Student Role; *Teacher Responsibility; Teacher Role; Teacher Student Relationship
IDENTIFIERS *Japan

ABSTRACT

From the results of questionnaires, it was found that students in a Japanese English-as-a-Second-Language course tended to be highly motivated to learn. At the same time, however, they did not seem ready for autonomous learning. It is speculated that because of their past learning experiences, where the students were excessively "spoon-fed" by their teachers, they failed to develop an autonomous attitude toward their learning. Their past learning tended to be teacher-oriented, grammar-based, and oriented toward competing with one another on examinations. It is concluded that high motivation does not automatically mean that learners are prepared to work and learn autonomously. For this reason, it is necessary to consciously train students to be more autonomous learners by raising their awareness of their own learning. This training includes awareness-raising for autonomous learning through textbook reading, lectures on meta-learning, journal writing, and individual consultations. It is concluded that the training did make the learners in this study more autonomous. It is also asserted that teachers are not only facilitators of learning, but also participants in learning. Learner training is not just to train students because in doing so teachers also learn from their students by interacting with their processes of learning. (KFT)

From the Learners' Perspectives : the Needs for Awareness-Raising towards Autonomy and Roles of the Teachers

Miyuki Usuki
Hokuriku University

ED 455 694

1.Introduction

From the results of questionnaires in April,1996, it was found that the students in English class tended to be highly motivated to learn. However, they seemed not to be ready for autonomous learning.

Regarding the students own problems in learning, inefficient learning strategies, less opportunities to use the language out of class, and particular macroskill problems (these three problems) were indicated by more than 50 % of students in the class. I believe that because of their past experiences, in which they were spoon fed by their teachers, they failed to develop their autonomy towards their own learning. From the interviews, I can conclude that their past classroom learning tended to be teacher-oriented, grammar-based, and forced to compare with other students for exam purpose. So, in my opinion, high motivation does not mean that learners can work autonomously.

For this reason, the learner training was conducted for this class. The prime objective of the training was to raise the learners' awareness of their own learning. In this paper, the effectiveness of the training and teachers' role were discussed.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Miyuki Usuki

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

026831

2.Literature Review

(1)Motivation

From a psychological point of view, Bruner said that " motivation specifies the conditions that predispose an individual to learn " (Cited in Sprinthall & Sprinthall, 1987). According to Bruner, basically, all students have some sort of motivation for learning. And he insists that there are two kinds of motivation which are intrinsic and extrinsic : Intrinsic motivation means motivation based on students' interests or curiosity about the task itself, whereas extrinsic motivation is motivation influenced from external factors. The distinction of motivation types which is the most well- known in the Second Language Area would be Gardner & Lambert(1959)'s Integrative motivation and Instrumental motivation. The former is related with intrinsical orientation, and the latter is as external orientation. However, from recent research findings, these motivation types seem to be not mutually exclusive (Brown, 1981 ; Ellis, 1986 ; Littlewood, 1984).

(2)Learner training

According to Wenden (1995), learner training needs to be focused on the key strategies for self-directed learning such as planning, monitoring,and evaluating. Also, she said, " a course in learner training requires that learners raise their awareness and reflect upon their knowledge of the language learning process". From the similar point, Ellis & Sinclair (1989) insisted that the emphasis in such training is on how to learn rather than what to learn. On the other hand, Ellis & Sinclair (1996/7) criticised no agreement of the definition of the term " learner training ". Then, they redefined:

" Learner training aims to help learners consider the factors which affect their learning and discover the learning strategies which suit them best and which are appropriate to their learning context, so

that they may become more effective learners and take on more responsibility for their own learning ".

3.The Study

(3-1) Learner Training

(3-1-1)Purpose

To raise learner awareness for autonomous learning through learner training

(3-1-2)Subject

The students were 34 first year students(Male 9, Fimale 25) majoring in English at a private university in Japan.

(3-1-3)Period

The period of the study was from April to July'96.

(3-1-4)Content

Each lesson was 60 mins. long, twice a week, altogether for 15 weeks. The training was curried out once a week. It included awareness-raising for autonomous learning and strategies through self-reflection by the textbook reading, journal writing, and setting consultation hours. The textbook was "How to be a More Successful Language Learner" by Rubin,J. & Thompson,I 1994 (Kinseido).

[Awareness-raising for autonomous learning through textbook reading]

Through reading, students' reflection on their own experience and critical-thinking about language learning were emphasised.

[Lectures on metalearning]

The importance of self-questioning and key strategies of metacognitive strategies such as planning - monitoring - evaluating inside and

outside the classroom were repeatedly insisted.

[Journal writing]

Once a week, the students submitted their journals. Their mother tongue ; Japanese was used in the journal so that they could freely write their feelings or reflections. Then, the teacher looked back on her own language learning experience and commented to them.

[Consultation hours]

Twice a week, the consultation hours were set up in terms of helping or giving suggestions to the students. Sometimes, the teacher called and talked with the students who complained about their problems in their journals.

(3-2) Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Training

(3-2-1)Purpose

In order to examine the changes of the learners' perspectives on their own learning, the result of self-evaluation questionnaires were compared in April and in July.

(3-2-2)The Result

Motivation (Graph 1)

The tendency of the motivation types did not changed much. Both in April and in July, the students had all types of motivations. Especially, integrative motivation was high.

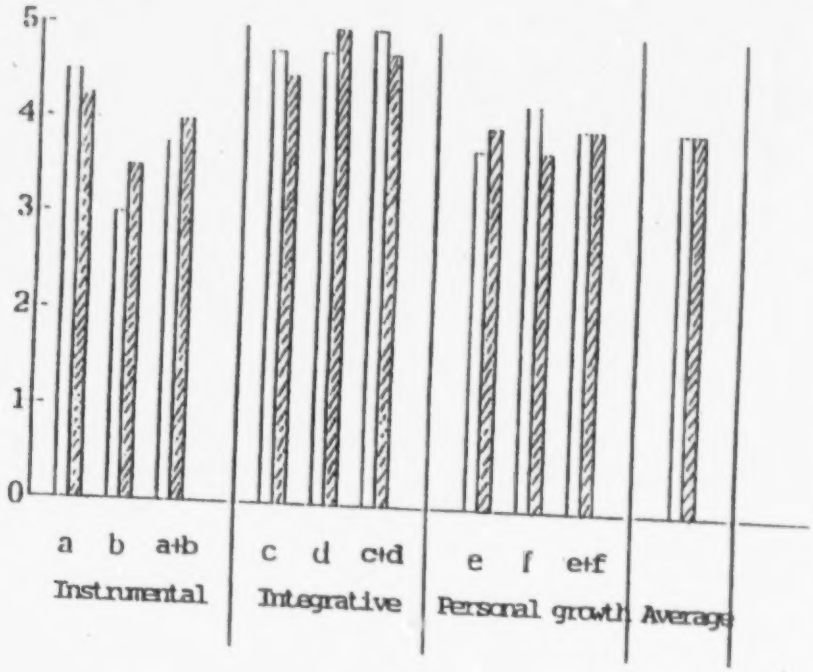
Autonomy readiness (Graph 2)

The number of students who had their independent work increased approximetely 15 % in July.

THE RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES

1. Motivation (Class Average) April ☐ July ▨

(Graph 1)

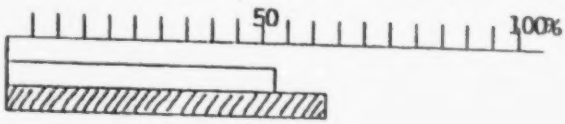


a Instrumental Business Reasons
b Other Instrumental Reasons
c Interest
d Communicative and Integrative Reasons
e Altrustic Reasons
f Positivity Reasons

(referred to Oxford et.al., 1993)

2. Awareness of Autonomous Learning (Graph 2)

I have my own work and try to improve my language ability.



Learners' own problems (Graph 3)

More than 50 % of the students in April indicated the following problems : inefficient learning strategies ; failure to use the language out of class ; particular macroskill problems. The above problems were all decreased in July.

Strategy frequency (SILL) (Graph 4)

Strategy Inventory for Language Learning was used. Although the tendency of strategy-choice did not changed much, the class average became higher in all strategy types in July. Especially, more than 70 % of the students increased their own average on strategy frequency.

Journal writing

In the class, nearly 80 % of the students were positive about Journal writing. Nearly 70 % of the students even have realized that journal writing was useful for increasing their autonomy in language learning. Positive Opinions about journal writing were related with :

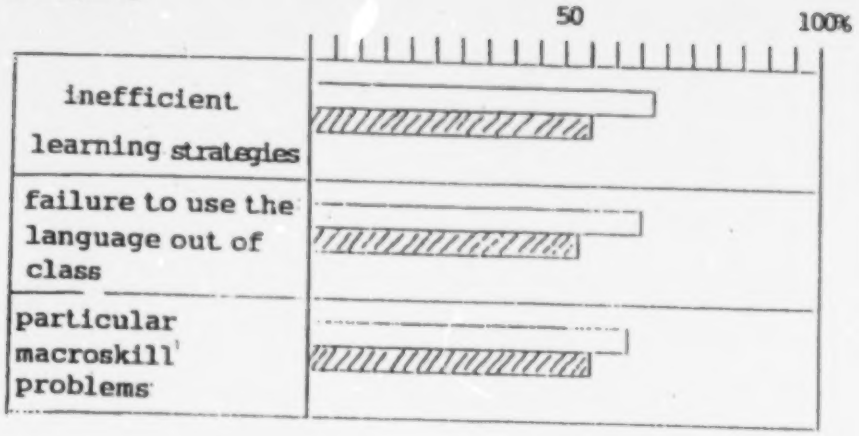
1) communication with their teacher
2) reflection on their own learning
3) awareness of their learning process
4) awareness of the language
5) interests of English speaking coutries
6) enjoyment of writing journals

However, there were a few Negative Opinions as well. Such as :

· I have nothing to write.
· It is troublesome to find things to write.

On the other hand, the teacher had been writing her teaching diary

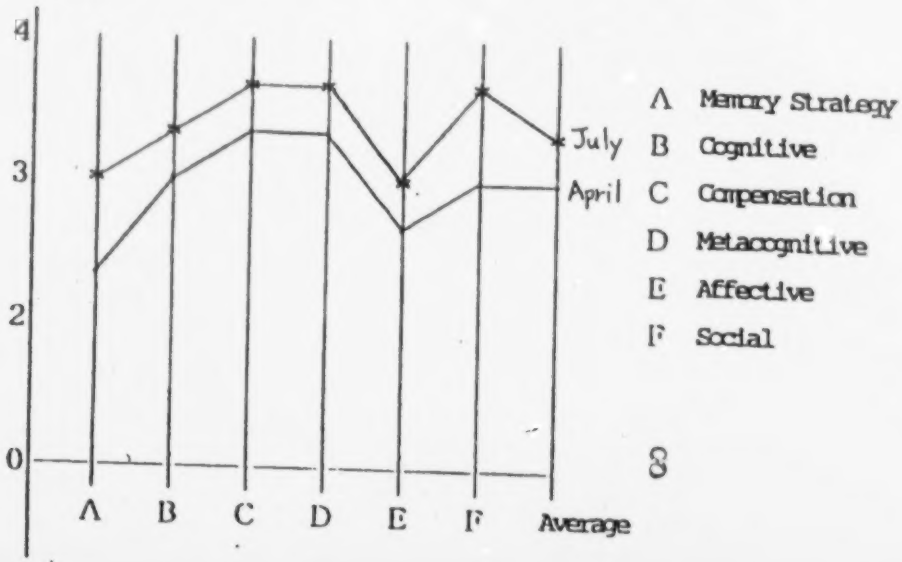
3. Learners' Own Problems
(Graph 3)



(1) Inefficient learning strategies
(2) Failure to use the language out of class
(3) Irregular attendance
(4) Particular macroskill problems
(5) Inappropriate learning activities
(6) Inappropriate objectives
(7) Faulty teaching
(8) Poor attention in class
(9) Personal(non-language) problems
(10) Learner attitude

(referred to Nunan, 1988)

4. Learning Strategies(SILL) (Class Average)
(Graph 4)



after each lesson. In her diary, she also wrote down her thought about dialogues with her students through their journals.. These comments were :

". Through the students' journals, I could see what sort of activities they were doing in other English classes.

· By writing my comments, I could be aware of language learning.

· I could have a chance to think back on my experiences on language learning or life in a foreign country.

· I could correspond to the students' problems quickly, and talk with them.

· I think that journal writing has improved the relationship with each student, and my effort to establish the relationship has influenced the atomosphere of the classroom."

Overall, journals were of benefit to the teacher in terms of reflecting her own language learning and teaching.

4.Conclusion

It can be said that the training was effective to make the students aware of their own learning. The approaches seem to have made shorten the distance between the teacher and her students. Moreover, the teacher, as well as her students could become aware that they were all participants of learning ; the students have started to be aware of their own learning, while she has become aware of her teaching and her relationship with students.

It is my belief that teachers are not only helpers or facilitators of learning, but also participants of learning. In this sense, learner training is not just to train our students, but we, as teachers learn from our students by interacting with their process of learning.

5.Implications

It is necessary to continue to encourage students to be autonomous learners. Even there are some students who still prefer to have teacher-centered classroom in terms of getting practical knowledge itself rather than knowing how to learn. It needs to be considered how these students can be treated to make them involve more positively and actively in their own learning in future. Is it necessary for the teacher to approach these students even closer and try to talk with individual students, more often ? At least, these students have become realized and started talking about their view in the language. The above point can be seen as an effect of the training. However, how to lead the learners towards real autonomous learning needs to be reconsidered.

Note

This article is based on the presentation of International Conference " Autonomy 2000 : The Development of Learning Independence in Language Learning in Bangkok, Thailand.

References

Biggs, J.B. & Telfer, R. (1989). *The Process of Learning.* Prentice-Hall of Australia.

Brown, H.D. (1981). Affective Factors in Second Language Learning, In Alatis, J.E., Alatis, P.M.,& Altman, H.B.(Eds). *The Second Language Classroom; Direction for the 1980's.* Oxford University Press.

Ellis, G. & Sinclair, B. (1989). *Learning to Learn English - A Course in Learner Training.* Cambridge University Press.

Ellis, G. & Sinclair, B. (1996). Unpublished. Cited in Sinclair, B.(1996/7). Learner Autonomy : How well are doing ? What do we need to do next ? *Independence,* No.18. pp7.

Ellis, R. (1986). *Understanding Second Language Acquisition.* Oxford University Press.

Gardner, R.C. & Lambert, W.E.(1959). Motivational Variables in Second Language Acquisition. *Canadian Journal of Psychology,* Vol.13, pp266 - 272.

Littlewood, W. (1984). *Foreign and Secdond Language Learning Acquisition Research and its Implications for the Classroom.*Cambridge Language Teaching Library.

Nunan, D. (1988). The Learner-Centred Curriculum. Cambridge Applied Linguistics.

Oxford, R.L.(1990). *Language Learning Strategies : What Every Teacher Should Know.* Newbury House.

Oxford, R.L. et.al. (1993). Japanese by Satellite : Effects of Motivation, Language Learning Styles and Strategies, Gender, Course Level and Previous Language Learning Experience on Japanese Language Achievement. *Foreign Language Annals*, Vol.26,No.3, pp 359 - 371.

Sprinthall, N.A. & Sprinthall, R.C. (1987). *Educational Psychology : A Developmental Approach*. Random House.

Wenden, A. (1995). Learner Training in Context : A Knowledge Based Approach. *System*, Vol.23,No.2,May, pp 183 - 194.